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Sustainable development: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 2007
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*
Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Towards a United Nations humanitarian assistance programme for disaster response and reduction: lessons learned from the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit for the consideration of the members of the General Assembly his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled, "Towards a United Nations humanitarian assistance programme for disaster response and reduction: lessons learned from the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster" (A/61/699-E/2007/8).

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Summary

The Secretary-General and executive heads of United Nations system organizations concur that the existing agreements, regulations, rules and guiding principles on international humanitarian and development assistance for disaster response and reduction developed by multilateral organizations need to be rendered more effective, and that ongoing reform initiatives to better tackle emerging global disaster threats should be vigorously promoted and implemented. The United Nations system has been focusing on improving disaster risk reduction and response in disaster-prone and affected countries by facilitating the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 through the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system, by developing national capabilities, and by encouraging the adoption and implementation of internationally developed procedures and guidelines on disaster preparedness and management, including guidelines on the rapid start-up of a transboundary disaster management process and providing assistance to Member States in establishing standby arrangements at the national level.

I. Introduction

1. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) report has as its main objective the strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations system to coordinate and support humanitarian assistance for disaster reduction and response through the integration of programmes, resource management and coordination, and the streamlining and standardization of operational, administrative and financial practices related to the entire disaster management cycle, namely, emergency relief, prevention and preparedness, risk reduction, and post-emergency recovery and reconstruction. The report offers lessons to be learned from the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster and identifies an urgent need for action by United Nations system organizations in strengthening the understanding and application of internationally established guidelines on disaster relief and recovery in affected countries, and in supporting the strengthening of national capacities for disaster risk reduction and response. The report also points out the need for participatory planning with affected populations, and for coherence and accountability in the delivery of the humanitarian response. The report highlights the importance of the United Nations system becoming increasingly accountable to affected countries and communities, to those who provide financial resources to facilitate the United Nations response, and to its own institutions that have the mandate and responsibility to act on behalf of the international community.

II. General comments

2. Since this review was undertaken in mid-2005, it does not capture many actions undertaken by the system, in particular regarding the development and strengthening of institutional frameworks for disaster reduction and response. Several of the recommendations echo key humanitarian reform issues and ongoing follow-up to the Hyogo Declaration and Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015. The attached note, in addition to commenting on the recommendations, also provides an update on current policy reform initiatives. There is concern that some of the recommendations, if misunderstood, might undermine recent efforts to streamline the system and lead to the creation of duplicative new mechanisms.

3. Organizations welcome the fact that the JIU report also covers the human rights dimension of natural disasters. As JIU has acknowledged, the Secretary-General recently focused his attention on Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as an important international framework for the protection of internally displaced people in his report entitled, "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005). In paragraph 210 of the report, the Secretary-General urged Member States to accept the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2) prepared by the Special Representative on Human Rights "as the basic international norm for protection of such persons, and to commit themselves to promote the adoption of these principles through national legislation", principles that have their genesis in binding international legal instruments, including international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law. In response, the General Assembly has welcomed the fact that an increasing number of States, United Nations agencies and regional and non-governmental organizations are applying these guidelines as a standard

when dealing with situations of internal displacement. The Assembly has encouraged all relevant actors to make use of the Guiding Principles (resolution 60/168).

4. Organizations agree that overlaps and duplications in the mandates of various coordinating bodies and mechanisms (such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, international financial and development institutions) must be addressed. Nevertheless, they remain concerned that the system will continue to remain fragmented unless the institutional frameworks, tools and policies are all coordinated with the United Nations entities dealing with man-made disasters, post-conflict reconstruction, including disaster response and reduction, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and overall preparedness issues within regular development programmes. In this regard, the report does not sufficiently address the need for closer interface with existing development frameworks, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Common Country Assessment (CCA), without which the United Nations system could not provide coherent support throughout different phases of crisis.

III. Specific comments on recommendations

Recommendation 1

The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to:

(a) **Review and assess the existing agreements, regulations, rules and guiding principles on international humanitarian assistance for disaster response and reduction developed by multilateral organizations, in terms of their relevance to the disaster-affected countries and the assisting countries;**

(b) **Present his assessment thereon in 2007 to the Economic and Social Council for its consideration and approval, together with proposals on a set of international regulatory norms and legal instruments by which emerging global disaster threats would be tackled more effectively;**

(c) **Take into account recommendations 2 to 6 in presenting his proposals above;**

(d) **Instruct the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator to assist the disaster-affected countries in establishing national capabilities to adopt and implement current internationally developed procedures and guidelines on disaster preparedness and management.**

5. Organizations welcome a review that would be carried out in the spirit of consolidating and making coherent the multiplicity of such agreements, regulations, rules and guiding principles. It is also noted that the issues raised in parts (a) and (b) of the recommendation are already being addressed through several mechanisms. The International Law Commission has included the protection of persons in the event of natural disasters in its work programme (A/61/10 and A/C.6/61/L.14). The United Nations also supports the action already initiated on international disaster response law that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is pursuing with its support to address gaps in the regulatory framework.

6. The Hyogo Framework for Action provides the basis for United Nations work on disaster risk reduction, and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction,

now expanded and renamed the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, is in the process of determining follow-up action to implement its decisions. Further development and endorsement of the above initiatives would indeed lead to improved disaster risk reduction and response.

7. With respect to part (d) of the recommendation, since relevant efforts have been pursued through the ongoing reform of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system, organizations would have preferred that the recommendation indicate the need to "instruct the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator to strengthen the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system for assisting the disaster-affected countries in establishing national capabilities to adopt and implement current internationally developed procedures and guidelines on all phases of disaster preparedness and management". Similarly, the sentence after the text box should read: "The implementation of this recommendation would contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations humanitarian assistance and disaster reduction system."

Recommendation 2

The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to formulate an additional minimum standard requirement in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2), complementing those currently provided, in order to ensure that the disaster-affected population has access to information-sharing and radio and telecommunication tools so as to have adequate humanitarian information. The implementation of this recommendation would contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of future relief operations for the disaster-affected population.

8. Organizations believe that there is no need to revise the Guiding Principles for this purpose. Instead, more attention needs to be given to the implementation of the June 2006 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) operational guidelines on human rights and natural disasters and the accompanying manual. These guidelines were prepared under the leadership of the Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights of internally displaced persons and acknowledge that affected communities were entitled to accessible information concerning the nature and level of disaster, possible risk mitigation measures, early warning information, and information on ongoing humanitarian assistance, recovery efforts and respective entitlements. (See general principle V.)

9. It is also suggested that the United Nations should air radio programmes in emergency situations, with the support of Governments. In addition, it is noted that some progress has been made in terms of access to information-sharing and radio and telecommunications tools by recipient populations, in partnership with the non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Recommendation 3

The Secretary-General should carry out an in-depth assessment of the experience and achievements of the Thai tsunami victim identification operation as a good practice of a disaster management mechanism, and present his findings thereon to the Economic and Social Council and propose, as appropriate, a victim identification system for its consideration and adoption. The implementation of this recommendation would result in the dissemination

of the best practices identified in the Thai tsunami victim identification operation and would benefit future United Nations relief activities.

10. Organizations support the recommendation for a victim identification system, which is particularly important in situations where the dimensions of the disaster outstrip the local capacity for tracing and monitoring. Given that victim identification has not been included in the current disaster management and response mechanism, support has been offered to an initiative by Interpol and involved Governments which seeks to identify and broaden the application of best practices for the improved management of future relief activities, including the issue of victim identification. Organizations do, however, have related initiatives, such as the World Health Organization (WHO)/Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) manual on the management of dead bodies after disasters.

Recommendation 4

The Secretary-General should consult on the relevant aspects concerned with the International Civil Aviation Organization and propose to the Economic and Social Council for its consideration in 2007 guidelines on the rapid start-up of a transboundary disaster management process, which would assist Member States in establishing standby arrangements among their national civil and military aircraft services. In the view of the Joint Inspection Unit the following recommendation would contribute to enhancing the efficiency of relief operations in large-scale disasters.

11. Organizations support this recommendation and concur that any standby arrangements that would increase the speed of response to disasters should be actively pursued. They point out, however, that the use of military assets might be highly sensitive in cases where natural disasters occur in the context of a complex humanitarian emergency. Nevertheless, all Member States should be encouraged to include in their national preparedness plans emergency start-up procedures for expedited access to assets used in humanitarian emergencies, particularly air assets for cross-border operations.

Recommendation 5

The Secretary-General should:

(a) **Include in the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams and/or any other relevant assessment missions organized by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, experts capable of carrying out scientific assessments of the impact of disasters, prevention procedures and early warning systems so that their findings can serve in planning the recovery and reconstruction phases;**

(b) **Develop standardized definitions and terminology for disaster response and reduction activities, as well as exit strategies and submit these to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2007 for its consideration and approval.**

12. Part (a) is already being implemented. The United Nations disaster assessment and coordination member countries have developed expertise within the system and make experts available to the teams deployed to assess the impact of the disaster. The teams may also draw on the significant scientific and technical expertise

available at the national level. Organizations point out that such work continues beyond the scope of the United Nations disaster assessment and coordination, and that further assessments and evaluations help inform planning the recovery and reconstruction phases. Indeed, disaster preparedness assessments should be carried out in disaster-prone countries before crisis hits, in order to assess, inter alia, risk, vulnerability, preparedness and potential mitigation measures. This was the logic behind the development of the In-Country Team Self-Assessment Tool for Natural Disaster Response Preparedness, designed by the IASC Task Force on Natural Disasters, which was sent with instructions to all resident/humanitarian coordinators. Organizations are committed to ensuring that the findings of such assessments and evaluations continue to inform planning for the recovery and reconstruction phases.

13. For part (b), organizations noted that such standardized definitions and terminology for response and reduction had already been developed and tested for use, although they recognized the need for consistency and training to ensure appropriate use of the terminology. The issue that remained to be fully resolved was that of institutional responsibility for coordination and leadership during transition.

Recommendation 6

The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to:

(a) **Review and further develop the terms of reference of humanitarian coordinators, profiles and skills for humanitarian coordinators, as well as a selection, training and management system that would ensure their leadership in the transition from relief to recovery and development;**

(b) **Develop a set of compliance procedures that would enable Member States to monitor the performance and accountability of: (i) resident and humanitarian coordinators; (ii) related humanitarian agencies to support the development of national plans and programmes for preparedness, recovery and reconstruction;**

(c) **Report to the General Assembly on progress made in points (a) and (b) above.**

The implementation of this recommendation would contribute, under paragraph (a), to enhanced coordination among humanitarian agencies on the ground, especially in the transition from relief to recovery and development, and under paragraph (b), would lead to enhanced accountability for the United Nations system recovery framework.

14. Organizations do not believe that there is a need to review and further develop the terms of reference for humanitarian coordinators at this stage, as the overall subject of the strengthening of the humanitarian coordination system has been pursued vigorously since 2006. In December 2005, the IASC Principals tasked the IASC Working Group with the development of a long-term strategy to ensure that the humanitarian community, as represented by IASC, is able collectively to identify, mentor, select, train, appoint and hold accountable, individuals who can deliver the most effective leadership in humanitarian emergencies. The IASC paper, entitled "Strengthening the Humanitarian Coordinator's System: what is our goal and how do we get there?" provides details on the agreed IASC actions. The IASC Humanitarian Coordinator Group has been set up and at the sixty-fifth session of the

IASC Working Group, its training concept paper for humanitarian coordinators and the profile for humanitarian coordinators were endorsed.

15. With regard to part (b) (i) of the recommendation, organizations consider that increased accountability to Member States by resident/humanitarian coordinators may be redundant. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182, resident coordinators already have direct accountability via their agreements with the national Government. Humanitarian coordinators are appointed only for a temporary assignment. Furthermore, executive boards of operational agencies already provide appropriate oversight. Organizations also observe that the monitoring of compliance is a function of management; the framework for delivery, such as the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) and the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), CCA, or UNDAF, depends on the situation.

16. Organizations consider that part (b) (ii) should be expanded to cover not only the humanitarian agencies, but also the development agencies, which have a role to play in recovery and reconstruction efforts. They strongly advocate the need to support national preparedness plans, programmes and systems, as is reflected in their work (for example, the ongoing WHO global survey of health preparedness).

Recommendation 7

(a) **The Secretary-General should propose to the Economic and Social Council, for its consideration and approval, terms of reference for an intergovernmental committee on disaster reduction and response which shall act as its support body;**

(b) **On the basis of the proposals of the Secretary-General, the Economic and Social Council may wish to establish an intergovernmental committee to deal with disaster response and reduction in an integrated fashion, in order to enhance international humanitarian assistance in all disaster-affected countries and reinforce its intergovernmental decision-making capacity and coordinating role within the United Nations system.**

The implementation of this recommendation would improve coordination of humanitarian assistance activities for disaster reduction and response among the participating organizations concerned through enhanced governance at the intergovernmental level.

17. Most organizations consider that this recommendation does not take fully into account the existing and increasingly strong International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) system, which was created to ensure inter-agency and international cooperation on disasters and risk reduction. They are in favour of a recommendation targeted at creating a stronger link between the International Strategy and the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in order to facilitate the engagement of Member States. General Assembly resolution 61/198 on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction contains a number of relevant provisions in this regard.

18. In order to highlight the fact that disaster reduction and response are two distinct processes, some organizations suggest inserting the word "both" in the text of the recommendation just prior to the two instances where the phrase "disaster reduction and response" appears, and in the sentence immediately following the recommendation. In addition, the sentence should have been further amended to

highlight the development dimension, reading as follows: "This recommendation would improve coordination of humanitarian assistance and development activities for both disaster reduction and response among the participating organizations concerns through enhanced governance at the intergovernmental level."

Recommendation 8

The General Assembly should request the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations to develop a joint integrated strategic and system-wide planning framework for the management and coordination of humanitarian assistance and disaster reduction and response activities. The Joint Inspection Unit holds the view that the implementation of this recommendation would contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance for disaster reduction and response.

19. Organizations note that paragraph H, which precedes this recommendation in the JIU report, fails to distinguish adequately between the long-term process of building the resilience of countries and communities to disaster and the shorter-term process of providing urgent humanitarian assistance following disasters; both are referred to as "humanitarian activities". The process of building resilience and reducing disaster risk can only be achieved through such long-term development processes as land use planning, infrastructure standards, development of appropriate legislation and policies, institutional development and capacity-building. Such measures are indeed referred to in the Hyogo Framework for Action. They suggest that the phrase "and development" should be included, so that the first sentence of the paragraph would read: "There is a strong intergovernmental consensus that an integrated strategic and system-wide planning and management framework needs to be in place, coupled with results-based frameworks, in order to coordinate better the humanitarian and development activities within and outside the United Nations system."

20. Some organizations consider that the request for the development of a joint integrated strategic and system-wide planning framework should come directly from the Secretary-General, and should strive for increased coherence in all risk management efforts, including risk reduction and response. While there, in fact, have been a number of improvements in this direction, including the cluster approach, the IASC quarterly report on early warning-early action, the HEWSweb and ReliefWeb, there is as yet no single coherent system for managing risk. One major advance in this area might be the harmonization of early warning systems by all humanitarian actors and a proactive stance by governments and resident/humanitarian coordinators to apply disaster reduction and risk education efforts in a systematic manner.

Recommendation 9

The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, should take the initiative to resume, in an appropriate form, the biennial report of the Board on the programmes and resources of the United Nations system covering humanitarian assistance and disaster management and submit it to the Economic and Social Council. The implementation of this recommendation would contribute to

enhancing coordination and cooperation in the area of humanitarian assistance and disaster management.

21. Organizations support this recommendation, which will contribute towards greater coherence.

Recommendation 10

The Secretary-General should encourage humanitarian coordinators to take, together with the host country, the following initiatives:

(a) **Establish minimum baseline indicators in order to ensure that relief supplies effectively reach the affected population in adequate quantity and standards;**

(b) **Mobilize, in close cooperation with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system and relevant United Nations regional commissions, all necessary support for the United Nations disaster management teams.**

The implementation of this recommendation would contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of local disaster response mechanisms in the affected communities.

22. Organizations agree with the need for baseline indicators, which would require agreement on a system-wide basis. Some consider, however, that this should be led by the resident coordinator. They also call for the report of the Inspector to clearly delineate the distinction between the ISDR system, which involves various international and regional implementing agencies, and the ISDR secretariat. Finally, they note that the newly established clusters are working on indicators to assess performance in their areas of activity, in addition to those established by Sphere project in sectoral areas. Global baseline indicators on disaster risk reduction are also currently being developed as a follow-up to the Hyogo Framework of Action.

Recommendation 11

The Secretary-General should ensure that humanitarian coordinators take the necessary measures to:

(a) **Build up country/regional assistance frameworks for disaster preparedness and resilience, effective relief, recovery and reconstruction;**

(b) **Update the common humanitarian action plans, as well as hazard risk maps and assessments, in consultation with the host Government concerned, taking into account the Hyogo Framework for Action and the capacity of the international recovery platform;**

(c) **Use the common humanitarian action plans as a basis for launching local consolidated and flash appeals to national and international donor communities, where appropriate, and periodically report on progress made to the Economic and Social Council, starting in 2007.**

The implementation of this recommendation would contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of disaster preparedness and response by United Nations country teams.

23. Organizations regard the strengthening of country and regional frameworks for risk management as crucial; however, they note that this is not a new recommendation. As noted earlier with regard to recommendation 5, the whole purpose of the Self-Assessment Tool was to encourage vulnerability assessment, risk/hazard mapping, and analysis of resources by the United Nations country team and its partners. Some consider that this should be mandatory, matched by generous support from donors, and by an equal interest in national and local policies on emergency preparedness. They also note that regarding (a) and (b), it is within the established responsibility of resident coordinators to take the necessary action. The Common Humanitarian Action Plan is an instrument used for planning with respect to emergency response situations, rather than for the planning of preparedness measures. Consolidated and flash appeals are also used for emergency response situations and should be based on assessments and contingency planning, as well as common action plans.

Recommendation 12

The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to commission a thorough independent evaluation of the work done by the United Nations Development Programme and its use of the related grant to it in fulfilling the responsibilities for operational activities for natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness transferred to the United Nations Development Programme from the Emergency Relief Coordinator by General Assembly resolution 52/12 B, and should re-examine the rationale and necessary financial arrangements for carrying out these responsibilities, based on the conclusions reached in the independent evaluation. The implementation of this recommendation is likely to enhance coordination of activities for disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness.

24. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) considers that paragraph L, which precedes recommendation 12 in the JIU report, incorrectly characterizes as ambiguous the General Assembly resolution transferring operational responsibilities for disaster mitigation, prevention, and preparedness to UNDP. It would prefer paragraph L to be formulated as follows:

> "In December 1997 the General Assembly by its resolution 52/12 B decided 'to transfer to the United Nations Development Programme the responsibilities of the Emergency Relief Coordinator for operational activities for natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness, with the understanding that the resources for this task will be separate and additional to the resources of the United Nations Development Programme for development activities and that they will be provided by a grant from the regular budget of the United Nations for the biennium 1998-1999'. Two years later, in February 2000 the General Assembly by its resolution 54/219 'endorse[d] the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish an inter-agency task force and inter-agency secretariat for disaster reduction, under the direct authority of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs'. This second resolution created the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat and an inter-agency task force. In contrast to the operational mandate assigned to the United Nations Development Programme, the functions of the secretariat and task force, as described in the Secretary-General's proposal in July 1999 (A/54/136, paras. 20 and 21), are exclusively in the nature of coordination,

policy formulation, advocacy and information sharing. The interpretation of these respective mandates has, however, been a source of protracted discussions on coordination between various agencies and programmes at the operational level. This state of affairs has the potential to affect consultative and coordination processes with attendant delays in decision-making."

25. UNDP further considers that recommendation 12 should have been articulated as follows:

> "The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to commission a thorough independent evaluation of the execution by the United Nations Development Programme and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat of their respective mandates. The evaluation of United Nations Development Programme fulfilment of its operational responsibilities should include, inter alia, its use of the related grant in fulfilling the responsibilities for operational activities for natural disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness transferred to the United Nations Development Programme from the Emergency Relief Coordinator by General Assembly resolution 52/12 B. The evaluation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat of its fulfilment of its coordination and advocacy mandate should include a review of three previous evaluations and of the current, ongoing reform of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system."

Recommendation 13

For those disaster-prone countries where a humanitarian coordinator has not been appointed, the Secretary-General should appoint the United Nations resident coordinators as humanitarian coordinators and provide them with adequate support when necessary. The implementation of this recommendation would enhance the effectiveness of disaster preparedness of the United Nations system in disaster-prone countries.

26. Organizations note that more needs to be done in order to enhance the effectiveness of disaster preparedness of the United Nations system in disaster-prone countries beyond the formal appointment of resident coordinators as humanitarian coordinators, which in any event is within the scope of responsibilities of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/182. In principle, the existing resident coordinator will be appointed as a humanitarian coordinator in a crisis situation, save for exceptional cases where a separate humanitarian coordinator is required. Some organizations consider that the term "humanitarian coordinator" should be reserved for countries in which there are ongoing humanitarian crises and not be used for preparedness situations. Beyond this, appropriate training is offered to resident coordinators and those selected to serve in disaster-prone countries are required to have appropriate humanitarian experience. Furthermore, support personnel are fielded by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to assist the resident coordinator in carrying out the relevant functions.

Recommendation 14

The Secretary-General should:

(a) Undertake a comprehensive review of the common support services system managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, drawing on the expertise and input of the relevant members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, so as to allow the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to have the means to fulfil its functions of providing central support services. This review should include the tasks of the Emergency Relief Coordinator under the Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations. The findings should be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session for its consideration and approval;

(b) Submit to the Economic and Social Council, a global scheme for the application of the humanitarian logistics support system in major disasters worldwide to be disseminated to and implemented by all relevant United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, drawing on the relevant experience of the World Food Programme and the Pan-American Health Organization in resolving logistical difficulties.

27. The United Nations Secretariat agrees that there is a need for the review of the humanitarian common services which are being administered by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (emergency telecommunications, humanitarian information centres and civil-military coordination) and by the World Food Programme (the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre and the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service). This recommendation, however, is already being addressed as part of a review commissioned by the IASC Working Group at its sixty-fifth meeting, held in July 2006, in the light of the newly established cluster approach. To ensure greater synergies, a joint Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs/World Food Programme humanitarian common services secretariat is being set up. As is the usual practice, the results of the ongoing review will be included in the relevant reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly.

28. The strengthening of humanitarian logistics is part of humanitarian reform. Organizations consider that it should be addressed through the cluster approach, which is designed to build up more predictable capacity, fill gaps and ensure better cooperation and coordination. Regarding the reference to SUMA in the sentence following part (b), organizations note that SUMA (PAHO Supply Management System), which has been proven to be effective in Latin America, has failed elsewhere, leading to the replacement of SUMA by the humanitarian logistics support system. They further note that SUMA lacks a coordination feature allowing for the matching of items delivered with identified needs. WHO, PAHO, WFP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have therefore sponsored a series of discussions, since July 2001, which have led to the development, during 2004/05, of the logistics support system by WHO/PAHO. The stakeholders of United Nations Joint Logistics Centre agreed in April 2006 to support the logistics support system and entrusted its field-testing and implementation to the Centre (in cooperation with WHO/PAHO).

29. To ensure accuracy, the last phrase of recommendation 14 (b) should read: "drawing on the relevant experience of the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization/Pan-American Health Organization in resolving difficulties".

Recommendation 15

The Secretary-General should:

(a) **Review the present mechanism used in the consolidated and flash appeals with a view to identifying weaknesses and shortcomings and devising ways and means of further improving it;**

(b) **Study the feasibility of strengthening the capacity of relevant national oversight authorities of the affected countries for monitoring and providing accountability for the use of the funds raised for the benefit of the affected population in the context of the Consolidated Appeals Process, as suggested by the Board of Auditors, as part of the United Nations system's capacity-building support for national recovery platforms;**

(c) **Report to the General Assembly on the improvements in the design of Consolidated Appeals Process procedures. The implementation of this recommendation would contribute to enhanced accountability for the use of funds raised through the Consolidated Appeals Process.**

30. Organizations consider that any review of the Consolidated Appeals Process system should take pains not to destroy what is a functional mechanism for channelling funds to emergency situations. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee is also continuously working with donors to improve planning and funding tools. Over the past few years a number of new instruments have evolved. The fundamental improvement that is now the focus for work over the next two years is the common framework for needs assessment, including the common definition of basic concepts. This work will trigger further changes in the financing instruments. The Consolidated Appeals Process mechanism is being consistently reviewed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee sub-working group set up for this purpose. Indeed, the Needs Analysis Framework, which has been approved by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, is being applied in an increasing number of countries (a target of 70 per cent of Consolidated Appeals Process countries in 2008). Currently, steps are also being taken to increase the speed of issuance of flash appeals, through generic costing for the first stage of an emergency, to be followed by more detailed assessment and revision.

31. Regarding recommendation 15 (b) on strengthening national capacity for oversight, UNDP has already successfully introduced DAD (Donor Assistance Database) in several countries, as a tool for Governments to monitor assistance flows and to maintain a better coordination basis for planning and direction. It is believed that DAD is a suitable tool for strengthening the capacity of relevant national oversight authorities of affected countries in addition to mechanisms put into place by the countries themselves.

Recommendation 16

The General Assembly, in conjunction with the independent review of the Central Emergency Response Fund to be carried out pursuant to Assembly resolution 60/124, should direct the Secretary-General to submit, with the

support of the participating agencies, a consolidated report on their use of the funds drawn from the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and its effects on their cash management, and report to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session on the investment policy in place to preserve the assets of the Fund, including the disposition of the interest and income accrued. The implementation of this recommendation would contribute to enhanced accountability for the use of funds drawn from the Central Emergency Revolving Fund.

32. The United Nations Secretariat agrees to include a review of the funds drawn from the Central Emergency Response Fund as part of the planned independent review of the Fund in 2008. Agencies that receive funds from the Fund are required to report on the use of such funds and the impact of the funds on the beneficiary populations. It should be noted that investment policies and treatment of interest accrued on the Fund are no different from those applied to other trust funds managed by the United Nations.

Recommendation 17

The General Assembly should take the following decisions to:

(a) **Merge the general trust funds, other than the Central Emergency Response Fund, under the management of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat into one single general trust fund under the management of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to be used for a humanitarian assistance programme for disaster response and reduction, and place it, together with the Central Emergency Response Fund including its revolving cash facility, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, under the framework of the said programme;**

(b) **Establish an appropriate body composed of Member States to assist the General Assembly in overseeing the management of these funds, which would, inter alia:**

(i) **Approve, on the basis of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the proposals of the Emergency Relief Coordinator on the administrative and programme support costs budget;**

(ii) **Approve the budget of the operational programme of the consolidated funds;**

(iii) **Review and examine the operation of the Central Emergency Response Fund;**

(iv) **Invite the Secretary-General to promulgate the financial rules of the programme (as referred to in para. (a)) above taking into account, inter alia, the observations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and report to the General Assembly on the functioning and management of the consolidated funds at its sixty-second session.**

The implementation of this recommendation would contribute to enhancing the efficiency of managing trust funds for disaster response and reduction and would also enhance accountability of the United Nations for the planning and

use of operational as well as programme support and administrative expenditures for emergency risk management and reduction.

33. The United Nations Secretariat disagrees with this recommendation. Although the overall purposes of the various trust funds under the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are interrelated and complementary, each trust fund has its own specific terms of reference. Donors take into account the specific purpose and terms of reference of the trust funds and make such contributions to the trust funds that are of interest to them. The Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction, for example, was established for the specific purposes of financing the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction secretariat and its activities, and is managed in Geneva. While the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is directly responsible for projects and activities funded from its general trust funds, projects funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund are implemented by other United Nations agencies and organizations. In view of the foregoing, the United Nations Secretariat does not agree with part (a) of the recommendation, to merge all the general trust funds under the management of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, other than the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction, under one single trust fund. It would, however, make every effort to consolidate, where practical, some of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs trust funds if their terms of reference and their purposes are more or less compatible and in line with action 24 of the Secretary-General's report on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387). Similar efforts will be undertaken regarding some International Strategy for Disaster Reduction trust funds, as appropriate.

34. With regard to part (b) of the recommendation, the United Nations Secretariat holds the view that adequate mechanisms are in place to ensure effective oversight and management of trust funds, including those under the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Furthermore, regarding the Central Emergency Response Fund, the Secretary-General has appointed an advisory board which meets twice a year and which will engage in the monitoring of the Fund.

35. As regards part (c) of the recommendation, the United Nations Secretariat considers that the existing Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations are adequate to provide for sound and effective administration and management of trust funds managed by the United Nations, and as such, a separate set of financial rules based on functional grounds are not necessary.